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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Loudoun Cat Care celebrates its three month anniversary
- Cats need acceptable places to scratch around the house
- Fall poses new unique hazards to cats
- Intestinal parasites can be prevented

## OTHER ARTICLES

[Tips for Fall](#)

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# News Prints

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## Welcome to Loudoun Cat Care

Loudoun Cat Care is getting ready to celebrate being open for three months! It is amazing how fast the time has gone by. We are delighted to meet all the new faces, as well as work with previous patients of Dr. Wiechmann. The building has come together very nicely and we are trying to

get the last pictures up and our "cat pretties" displayed. Even the computer system is getting easier to use and navigate. As most of you will have noticed, the sign is finally back around the proper way. We are very excited to be able to advertise and let Loudoun know that we are open and

ready to serve cats. If you have not been in, come by and we will give you a tour. We love to show off our facility and tell you about our medicine.

- *Dr. Wiechmann*

## Environmental Enrichment

Environmental enrichment is a hot topic in veterinary behavior right now. Studies are showing that many "bad" behaviors, such as scratching furniture and urinating out of the box, are extensions of natural cat behavior that is exacerbated by living 100% indoors and being bored. This newsletter will focus on scratching behavior and the next one will deal with inappropriate urination.

Scratching is a cat's way to mark an object with both visible marks and scent marks, and to remove the extra sheaths on the toenails. In the house a cat marks objects by scratching, the way they would mark a tree in the wild. We as humans do not appreciate the territorial markings to the carpet or furniture and get angry at the cat. The cat does not

understand why we are angry at a perfectly natural behavior. Thus we need to give cats appropriate places to scratch. There need to be horizontal and vertical surfaces, various textured surfaces, and surfaces at varying heights for cats to scratch on.



Wild cats prefer a vertical surface on which to stretch up and leave their scent and claw marks. Claw marks are as individual to each cat as our fingerprints are to us. Lots of times cats will

scratch at the "entrance" to a room or a piece of furniture; ie on the end or armrest of the sofa, and not in the middle. This is because they are marking that area as their territory and want the marks to be visible to detract others from invading their space.

There are many kinds of scratching posts made and sometimes you have to experiment to see which one your cat prefers. Examples of common scratchers are sisal, carpeted, and cardboard. Scratching posts should be placed in prominent or commonly scratched areas, and often need to be located near where a cat sleeps as cats tend to stretch and scratch when they wake up. Posts can be sprinkled with catnip in order to encourage the cat to use it, have treats placed on the post, or you can just use oral

# Tips for Fall



As the days get shorter and the kids go back to school, it is time to think about safety hazards and common problems that come with the changing seasons. In Northern Virginia, we have some of the highest pollen and mold counts, especially in late August, September and October. Weeds such as ragweed and goldenrod are bad and the leaf molds start increasing as the trees drop their

leaves. Watch for signs of allergies, increased and excessive grooming, itching at the ears and head, small scabs on the body and for asthma, a coughing, wheezing sound. Cats do get allergies and they can show up in a multitude of ways. Please call and schedule an appointment if your cat seems to be having any allergy related problems.

As the weather gets colder and the ground starts to freeze, people start bringing in their plants over-night. Watch out for plants and flowers that can be toxic, such as ALL lilies, amaryllis, baby's breath, some ferns, some ivies, and onions

and garlic. Acorns, if ingested, can also be toxic, but this is more of a problem with dogs. For a complete list of toxic plants go to [www.cfainc.org](http://www.cfainc.org) and search for their toxic plant list.

Another big toxin in the fall is antifreeze. Many people are handy and will change their anti-freeze and flush the radiator. Antifreeze has a sweet smell and taste and thus a curious cat will often take a few licks. This is a very toxic substance that causes the kidneys to fail. It can take up to 24 hours after ingestion to show clinical signs; at this time it is often too late to help the cat. If possible, use propylene glycol in your radiator instead of antifreeze, check your car regularly for radiator leaks, and clean up any antifreeze spills immediately.

**Worms that infect pets can harm people too! Read how to protect your entire family.**

## Preventing Intestinal Parasites

To reduce the risk of certain parasite infections to your family and cats Loudoun Cat Care recommends simple precautions:

- Start a regular de-worming schedule recommended by your veterinarian when your kitten is very young.
- Bring a fresh stool sample with you each year for your cat's annual physical exam, even if the cat is 100% indoors. Potting soil, and
- the dirt we bring in on our shoes, can contain eggs and larvae for round and hook-worms.
- Wash your hands after handling pets and after cleaning the litter box or working in the yard. Also wash children's hands after playing in a park or other area where dogs or cats may have defecated.
- Wear gloves when gardening
- and doing yard work.

## Continued from front...

praise. When you catch a cat scratching on something that it is not supposed to scratch on, firmly tell it no and remove it from the location it is scratching and place it on the scratching post that you have provided. Sometimes it helps to have you move the cat's feet in the scratching motion on the post and then provide both oral and edible praise for a job well done. Unlearning a behavior and creating a new one take time. It may take a

few weeks of persistence to re-train a cat to scratch only on the scratching post. Do not give up and stay consistent. If you are getting a new kitten, start working with it from day one and use lots of oral praise in order to train it to use the appropriate object for scratching.

It is a good idea to also trim the nails of your cat every 2 to 4 weeks. Most cats will adjust to this if

started as kittens. If nail trimming and scratching posts do not fix the problem, there is a product called soft paws that can be put on the toe nails. These are plastic covers that are blunt at the end and allow a cat to scratch without causing damage. Please call to talk to our veterinarian or a veterinary staff member if your cat continues to scratch on things other than the scratching posts that you provide.